

“1776”

“1776” will be the first play performed at Schreiber this year. The play was an obvious choice, seeing that this is our bicentennial year. The cast performs “1776” in the auditorium on Friday and Saturday night for two consecutive weeks, November 7, 8, 14, and 15. Mr. Jones, the director, feels that he has combined good acting with a lot of good voices. The cast is equally divided between seniors and juniors, with a couple of sophomores. However, out of the twenty-six parts in the play only two are female. Because of this, tryouts for these two roles were only open to senior girls.

The Performing Arts Department chose the leading roles. Tim Nissen plays John Adams, the volatile representative from Massachusetts. Tim's professional experience includes parts on Broadway and in the soap opera “Another World.” Mark Mastrocinque plays Benjamin Franklin and Jeremy Mann plays the writer of the Declaration of Independence,



Continental Congress in session

Thomas Jefferson. The conservative leader of Congress, John Dickenson, is played by Michael Barrack. The two female parts, Abigail Adams and Martha Jefferson are played by Karen Reiff and Amy Appleby, respectively. Mr. Stone is the musical director and Mr. Valentini, from the language department, is in charge of the choreography.

The sets will be made by the Play Production class. Kathy O'Connor is the assistant to the director and since

the cast almost totally consists of males, Mr. Jones decided to have a female stage manager, Barbara Davilman.

There was as usual a large turnout to compete for parts. Approximately thirty-five boys and ten girls tried out for the production. There were some complaints about the lack of female roles so to compensate for that Mr. Jones picked “The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie” and “Glory Hallelujah” as the other plays for the 1975-76 season.

“1776” Excels . . . Courteously

by Michael Joseph

“Enthusiasm” is a reviewer’s euphemism used to gloss over the rough spots in amateur dramatic productions. The Department of Performing Arts’ production of “1776”, presented on Friday and Saturday nights, November 7, 8, 14, and 15, though certainly not devoid of rough spots, needs no such critical protection. The greatest strength of the production, in fact, was its lack of inappropriate, boyish enthusiasm. For the most part, the men on stage were as men, which is perhaps the highest praise a production of this sort can receive.

The actions of the Continental Congress in the month preceding the signing of the Declaration of Independence would hardly seem to be the stuff of which musical comedy could be made, but the play is a good one. Though awkward in spots, the songs are good, there are more than a few legitimately funny moments, and there is ample opportunity for creative interpretation of character.

Greatest use of this opportunity was made by Michael Barrack as conservative John Dickinson of Pennsylvania. Barrack’s performance was simply splendid, easily the best of the evening. His characterization was as well conceived as it was executed, as by its own power it illuminated the concerns of every man in the Congressional chamber. His was the finest performance in recent years by a Schreiber student.

As fine as was Barrack’s performance, he could not totally eclipse the other players. The mental agility and bawd of Benjamin Franklin were well portrayed by Mark Mastrocinque, though physically he appeared a bit too nimble. Rather than dance only with the rise and swell of occasions, he would hobble as an old man only when he thought of it.



Jefferson, Franklin, and Adams chirp

Rheinhardt/Port Light Photo

Tim Nissen’s portrayal of Massachusetts’ John Adams, though good, was rather curious. He was properly obnoxious and dislikeable as Adams, the prime-mover for the Declaration, but he achieved that status by the unsatisfying artifice of simply being loud. He was most effective the few times he lowered his voice, as in the dark hours immediately preceding the final vote on independence.

The lesser roles were nearly as well played as the greater, never falling below adequacy, and rising well above that level more times than there is space to mention. Particularly outstanding, however, was A.B. Appleby in a marvelous, restrainedly unrestrained performance as Martha Jefferson. Her song, “He Plays the Violin,” was musically the most rewarding number in the show. Also demanding mention by name are

Joe Caparella as the delegate from South Carolina, particularly for his song, “Molasses to Rum,” which built from the worst of starts to the best of finishes; and the courier, played by Brian Hiller, for his beautifully sung “Momma, Look Sharp.”

The production was technically well mounted. Costumes and makeup were spectacular, though Benjamin Franklin did look a little green. The direction and choreography was also good: the only traffic jams were those that would actually have occurred in a small room full of politicians. A difficult musical score became occasionally muddled, but was strong when it needed to be, highlighted by a fine sounding string section. “1776”, and particularly Michael Barrack’s John Dickinson, provided some of the best theatre entertainment that Schreiber has ever hosted.